

City Council Work Session

Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8 and Emergency Order #12, Section 3

January 18, 2021

At 6:30 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened the meeting. Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;*

We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID 820 7431 3157; Passcode 416964, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, [www.berlinnh.gov](http://www.berlinnh.gov).

- b) *Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:*

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have been provided on the City of Berlin's website of the Council at City Council-agendas

- c) *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:*

If anybody has a problem, please call Pam Laflamme at 603-752-8587 or e-mail at: [plaflamme@berlinnh.gov](mailto:plaflamme@berlinnh.gov)

- d) *Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting*

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. By roll call, each member is to state their presence, and whether there is anyone in the room during this meeting, which is required under the Right to Know law.

Present were: Mayor Grenier at City Hall and in the room with James Wheeler, Councilors Higbee, Remillard, Otis, Morgan, Theberge, Berthiaume, Rozek and Eastman who noted they were alone in their respective rooms.

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun.

### **Mason Street Bridge**

Mr. Wheeler shared a letter with the Council from HEB as a follow up to the bidding process for the Mason Street Bridge. No bids were received again, and they provided reasons as to why contractors do not find the project enticing. First, the project has not been approved in the budget. Second, there are not many bridge contractors and they are taking work closer to home. Also, the project is a risk for them with fines for not completing the work in the three weeks allocated by Central Rivers Power. HEB provided four options for moving forward: rebidding, removing some of the risk, breaking up the work into smaller pieces, and an RFP. Rebidding may get the same result, with no bids. Removing some of the risk, such as the City's damages of \$1,000 a day could be done, but not the \$9,000 per day that Central Rivers Power would charge. They could talk to contractors to find out how to break the work up into a two year project so that they would feel confident completing the work in three weeks. They could also put the project out as an RFP. Several Councilors showed support for the RFP, but agreed that discussing the project first would be beneficial. Mr. Wheeler advised that there will be increased costs for engineering either way, and if they choose to go with the RFP, they will have to waive the bid process. Councilor Rozek asked that the Council be kept informed of which contractors may be interested in the project.

### **121 Main Street Demolition Discussion**

Mr. Wheeler advised that at the recent BIDPA meeting, the Board noted the demolition of the Princess Theater and Fire Department building and asked about 121 Main Street, which is the Woolworth building. BIDPA offered to pay for the demolition up front, and have the city pay back the amount over a period of time. Councilor Eastman asked about the condition of the building, as he had heard it was just the back portion that was not in good shape. Ms. Laflamme advised that the building was inspected by HEB and former Fire Chief Lacasse, and that there are structural issues in both the front and back of the building, and there have been two major water issues. Mayor Grenier noted that one factor in CCFHS backing out of their plan was the need to tear the building down. Councilor Higbee stated the building once belonged to the City, and was given to BIDPA. BIDPA has paid tens of thousands on maintenance, and prefers the City take responsibility for the demolition. Ms. Laflamme stated that Primex would also agree with demolition, as the building is a liability. Councilor Rozek noted the change in elevation from Main Street to Pleasant Street and asked about plans to beautify the lot after demolition, as this is a highly visible area. The City will need to work on final terms with BIDPA before proceeding.

### **Urban 3 Presentation Discussion**

Ms. Laflamme advised that the video of the Urban 3 Presentation will be available on the website, they are in the process of getting it updated to share. The NH Housing Finance Authority looked at land use and value in communities in NH and compared and contrasted Berlin to 14 other communities in the state. The presentation made the data very easy to understand and to use to make good decisions for the community. Ms. Laflamme advised that they will be looking at Zoning regulations, which were first put into place in the 1960's, and were updated in the 1990's, but could be made easier for development for both business and residential property owners. Councilor Rozek advised that anything they can do to encourage growth and development is a good. Councilor Higbee shared that the most valuable property per square acre in Berlin is a downtown Main Street building, and that the more you contain business and residential to save space, the more value you have. When building up, rather than out, you use the same infrastructure such as roads and water and sewer.

**Other**

Mayor Grenier advised that he would like to add Brown School to the agenda under other. Councilor Higbee moved to add Brown School to the Work Session agenda; Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Mr. Wheeler advised the Council that they are planning to use Brown School as the site for people to receive the COVID vaccine. The school has everything they need, including being closer to AVH, as the vaccine will be stored in the pharmacy there and transported to the site as needed. Councilor Morgan asked if the front entrance was handicap accessible and Mr. Wheeler advised it is at grade. Mr. Wheeler also advised that there has been some confusion as to how to register for the vaccine. The state uses a system in which you need an email address to make an appointment. CCFHS has many patients who do not have email accounts, and will be setting up a parallel system to assist those patients with securing appointments. Councilor Remillard advised the state is also setting up a 211 line for appointments. Mr. Wheeler advised that you do not have to be a CCFHS patient to go to the vaccine clinic, as the goal is to not turn anyone away.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business in work session, Mayor Grenier moved on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Shelli Fortin  
City Clerk

\*Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the City Council by motion.